

Wycombe earn shirts and tributes

By RICHARD TAYLOR

WYCOMBE's band of happy football wanderers made the long trek back from the North-East to Buckinghamshire in the early hours of this morning, treasuring a set of red and white Middlesbrough shirts and memories of a remarkable night.

Thirty thousand Middlesbrough fans paid them a tribute just by going to Ayresome Park for last night's replay.

And those fans were there at the end, giving defiant Wycombe a two-minute standing ovation

after they fell to a last minute goal by David Armstrong.

It was a goal that had to be cruel to be kind.

Wycombe manager Brian Lee, standing beaming in the dressing room after the game said: "We'd started to flag in the last ten minutes. I'm glad Boro scored when they did. If we'd lasted another minute and gone into extra time we could have lost 6-0."

"We achieved our aim. We made Boro work for it. Our players can be very proud."

Wycombe have more than mere memories to remind them of their two games against the joint leaders of the First Division.

Dr Neil Phillips, Middles-

brough's vice-chairman, brought to Wycombe's dressing-room the complete strip his players had worn for the match. And Wycombe, the Rothmans Isthmian League champions, have another bonanza to add to the £7000 they took from Saturday's home match.

Jack Charlton, the relieved Middlesbrough manager, said: "I began to wonder if we'd ever score."

Middlesbrough substitute Alan Willey hit the bar, and Armstrong rattled a post. Wycombe goalkeeper John Maskell made a string of outstanding saves, while in front of him, Alan Phillips, Keith Mead, Paul Birdseye and Gary Hand turned back Middlesbrough's assaults.

Charlton said: "People say these boys are only part-timers. But they choose to be part-timers, and there were players in that team who would grace any League side. They'd rather play for enjoyment and keep their jobs."

And it was back to those jobs today for the estate agents, company directors, wood machinists and accountants of Wycombe.

And when Brian Clough brought his Nottingham Forest team to Bisham Abbey Sports Centre today to prepare for tonight's Cup replay at Tottenham, he probably got a shock.

Because the director at Bisham is Brian Lee, and, for once, Clough will have done most of the listening.